BV
639
C4H3

THE CHILDREN · THE CHURCH AND THE COMMUNION

CHARLES CUTHBERT HALL

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.
BV 639
Chap. ..... Copyright No. .....
Shelf .C4H3
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Books by Charles Cuthbert Hall.

INTO HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT. Studies in Life and Belief. 2d Thousand. Crown 8vo, $1.50.

DOES GOD SEND TROUBLE? An Earnest Effort to Discern between Christian Tradition and Christian Truth. 4th Thousand. Crown 8vo, $1.00.

THE CHILDREN, THE CHURCH, AND THE COMMUNION. 16mo, 75 cents.

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY,
BOSTON AND NEW YORK.

THE CHILDREN, THE CHURCH, AND THE COMMUNION

TWO SIMPLE MESSAGES TO CHILDREN, FROM ONE WHO LOVES THEM AND WHO WANTS THEM TO LOVE THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE TABLE OF CHRIST

BY

CHARLES CUTHBERT HALL

MINISTER OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BROOKLYN, N. Y.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
COPYRIGHT
APR 10 1895
CITY OF WASHINGTON
19222-aa

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1895

BV639
.C4H3

Copyright, 1895,
By CHARLES CUTHBERT HALL.

All rights reserved.

The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.
Electrotyped and Printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.

TO

K. B. E.

AND

OTHER DEAR CHILDREN

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

IN memory of the Children's Service on Sunday eventide, which for many years has been a part of our Church life, and in hope of helping some young hearts to learn more of the joy of worship, these two sermons, selected from many, are printed as they were preached. No apology is made for their simplicity, nor for the things in them which suggest the church in which they were spoken. The loving desire goes with them that they may carry, clearly enough for children to understand, encouragement for those who are, and for those who want to be, the younger disciples of the Lord Jesus.

BROOKLYN, Easter, 1895.

BLESSED LORD, Who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them; that, by patience and comfort of Thy Holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; which Thou hast given us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His Only Son our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell, the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; the Resurrection of the body; and the Life everlasting. *Amen.*

I 'VE found a Friend; O such a Friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him,
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him;
And round my heart still closely twine
Those ties which nought can sever,
For I am His, and He is mine,
Forever and forever.

I've found a Friend; O such a Friend!
He bled, He died to save me;
And not alone the gift of life,
But His Own Self He gave me.
Nought that I have my own I call,
I hold it for the Giver,
My heart, my strength, my life, my all
Are His, and His forever.

I've found a Friend; O such a Friend!
So kind and true and tender,
So wise a Counsellor and Guide,
So mighty a Defender.
From Him, Who loves me now so well,
What power my soul can sever?
Shall life, or death, or earth, or hell?
No! I am His forever.

THE CHILD IN GOD'S SANCTUARY.

"PRAISE GOD IN HIS SANCTUARY."

PSALM cl. 1.

THE time has come, dear children, for me to speak forth to you the special message which, I truly believe, God gives me to give to you. Suppose your father were off somewhere on a journey, let us say England; and from England he writes you, and the postman calls at your door with the letter. The postman is just the messenger between your father and you. The postman simply gives you the message which has been handed him to hand you. The postman did not make up the letter. Your father made it up, and the postman delivered it. I feel often, when I speak to you in the Children's Service, like the postman delivering a letter. It does not seem as if it were my word I were giving you, but the word of your Father Who

is in Heaven, a message from Him to you, simply delivered by me as His messenger. I feel very much so this afternoon, for the message which I have to give you is important, and has much to do with the strength and happiness of your life. I know you will listen to every word, both for my sake, your earthly friend, and much more for the sake of that greater, unseen Friend, "Who loved you ere you knew Him."

We are here together in the building which we have learned to call "our Church." This roof, these walls, these windows, and the furniture here gathered, the pulpit, the great organ (which is to many of us like a living friend), the font, the communion table, go to make up a place which is different from all other places to which we go. We have many places to which we can go. We have our own houses and the houses of our friends; we have hotels, we have stores, we have schools, we have places of amusement and places of instruction, libraries, picture

galleries, museums. But this place, where we are now gathered, is not like any of the others. This is a place that stands by itself. A certain sacred blending of light and shadow is here. Even the sunlight, streaming in here at noon, seems more calm than other sunlight, and when the evening shadows lengthen here, as they are lengthening now, they bring with them upon our hearts stillness and thoughtfulness and peace. It is a dear, happy place; not sad and gloomy, but happy with a happiness that seems to make us better. We never think of laughing here, as we laugh at home, yet we are very happy often when we are here.

We call this place, as you know, the House of God. That is another and a grander name for our church, — "The House of God." By this name we do not mean to say that God lives here and nowhere else, as one of us has his house on one street, and another has his house on another street. But by this name we

always remind ourselves that we have specially given this place to God; that we have set apart the ground on which this building stands, and the walls built upon this ground, and the furniture within these walls, the organ with its noble voice, the windows with their glorious colorings, — *everything* here, — we have set apart as a special gift to God, in the honor of God, to the glory of God, for the praise of God. And it is this great thought, with the associations springing from it, which makes this place seem different from any other place to which we go.

But there is yet another thought about this place, this church, this House of God, which makes it dear and precious to many of us. You will see that my text says: "Praise God in *His Sanctuary*." "Sanctuary" is only another name for Church, but it is such a fine, strong name, I must explain it to you. "Sanctuary" means a sacred place of refuge and protection. It is a thought which every child can in a mo-

ment understand. I can tell the meaning of "sanctuary" in such a way a child four years old can understand. Suppose such a little child is playing in the nursery, and somehow or other, as will happen even to a little child, she gets tired, and restless, and none of the things to play seems just the right thing, and there is a little more fretting, and baby is getting a little more unhappy, and suddenly, things get very bad indeed, for baby, being a little careless of what she does, has tripped and fallen, and hit her forehead on the carpet, and the carpet has made a mark on her poor little forehead. Not a very bad mark, but just enough to bring all the restlessness of the whole afternoon out at once in a great cry. And now what does baby want? She wants a "sanctuary." I do not mean by that that baby wants to go to church, but she wants a sanctuary; and what did I say a sanctuary is? Did I not say a sanctuary is a place of refuge and protection? That is what baby wants: a place where she can

go and pour out all the crying restlessness in her little heart, and feel the strong, dear clasp of loving arms around her, and have her thoughts turned to bright and happy things, and be at rest once more. And where does baby find her sanctuary? Does she need any one to tell her where it is? No, indeed. God has long before told her little baby-nature where her sanctuary is, where her place of refuge is; and baby spreads out her hands and runs weeping to mother's arms and hides her face on mother's shoulder, and soon the storm of restlessness is past; new thoughts have come, and in the sanctuary of her mother's love baby has found what she needed.

And as we grow older we see that everybody and everything needs a sanctuary — a place of refuge. Think of those icy steamers out at sea, plunging through fearful waves swept by hurricanes. Whither were they going? If each great panting steamer could speak to you each would say

the same thing, the brave Teutonic, the ice-freighted Circassia, the poor wandering Gascogne:[1] "We are trying to get to a sanctuary — a place of refuge from these roaring storms. We are making for the port of New York, for there we know we can get shelter and safety, and fresh coal and food, and a chance to repair damages ere we put out to sea again." And, children, you watch your father, as he comes home tired and cold night after night in these anxious times. See how his face brightens as he stands in the hall with you about him, and takes off his overcoat and comes in by the fire, and makes himself fresh for the bright dinner-table. See with what a look of pleasure he gathers you about him and lets you talk to him of what you have been doing. What is it? It is "sanctuary." Home is your father's

[1] This sermon was preached in February, 1895, during great storms at sea. In the following week the overdue French steamer La Gascogne reached New York, to the joy of every one.

sanctuary, his place of daily refuge and protection. He feels safe and happy there with the trustful arms of children about him, with brighter thoughts pouring in upon his tired brain; there, among you, he gains new strength for the battle that must begin again to-morrow morning.

Now what the mother's arms are to the restless baby, what the harbor of New York is to the storm-beaten Teutonic, what the home and the fireside are to the tired man of business, *that* is the church meant to be for us all. A place of refuge and protection; a Sanctuary of God, given us in His dear mercy, that we may use it and love it and find new thoughts and new hopes within it; a place where we can get away for a little time from the things and people outside who tempt us to do wrong, where we can get a short and sweet relief from the drudgery of work, where we can take in a new, fresh supply of grand and beautiful thought, and where we can express the very noblest and

best that God Himself has taught us, by pouring out our hearts in praise. And so we all see the meaning of our text, "Praise God in His Sanctuary." It says: "Come to this House of God, come into these calm, sweet scenes, come into the atmosphere of worship, and get your life rested, refreshed, purified, renewed in faith, in hope, in love. Come and give yourself joyously, earnestly, reverently, to what is going on here. Come, every one of you, and praise God in His Sanctuary."

Now if I have made clear to you all what this place is for, as a House especially set apart for God, and as a Sanctuary, — a place of sacred refuge and protection for human lives where they may come and be lifted up into grander thoughts and nobler desires by praising God, — I wish to go on and speak, in the few moments which are left, about children coming to church.

The church and the children are two things that belong together. The church cannot do without the children. The chil-

dren cannot do without the church. Suppose we try to imagine what would happen if the church were without the children and the children without the church.

Fancy this church without any children. I am not talking now about the Sunday-school, which meets at another hour in another place. I am talking about this Sanctuary: this place where we are now gathered and where we meet to "praise God in His Sanctuary" every Sunday morning and every Sunday afternoon. I will suppose there are just as many children in the Sunday-school as ever there were; but that none of them comes to church. They all go home after Sunday-school and never come back here even in the afternoon. Now I say, imagine this church without any children. What would happen? Well, the first thing to happen would be that I would think I ought to go away. The day the children stop coming to church I ought to stop, too. Some one else must be the minister of the church in

which there are no children. Now let us imagine it, and I thank God it is pretty difficult to imagine it with all these dear child-faces looking at me from the pews. But I *will* imagine it: the children all stay away; they never come any more; and some stranger asks the new minister, "Why do not the children come?" and he says: "Oh! I am not sure that we want them. You know, children are restless and apt to make a noise and disturb the congregation. And then, beside, the church service is for men and women, grown persons, who can understand and appreciate what is going on. The church service is over the heads of the children. They cannot be supposed to understand it; and there is nothing particularly to interest them. And then, you know, we have the Sunday-school for children: that is enough like church for them; and so, for all these reasons (the new minister goes on to say), the children have all stopped coming to church. We never have any, any more."

Alas! for the church to which the children have stopped coming! It may be a grand and beautiful place, with fine preaching and fine people. But a church without children is like a home without children: it lacks something from its life that nothing else can supply. A home may be stately and magnificent with its great rooms full of paintings and statuary and books; and the people who live in it may be sweet and loving and gentle; and forth from that home may extend blessed influences; but nothing can give completeness to that home in the highest, tenderest sense of human completeness unless there is in that home the presence of a child, and the influence of a child. The presence of children in a home gives a certain gladness and freshness and hopefulness and courage which is their special ministry. I know what I am speaking of; and you *know* that I know. When people grow up they get deeper and deeper in cares and see more and more of sorrows, other peo-

ple's sorrows if not their own, and nothing keeps one from growing old and sad at heart, or hard and bitter at heart, like having children for one's companions and for one's friends. Now this church is just like one great home made up of many separate homes : indeed a church is called in the New Testament an "household of faith." And our meeting together in this place is just the household coming together to praise God in His Sanctuary, and we need the influence of children here in this common home as much as we need it in our separate homes. This church without its children would be a dreary, sad, stiff, and haughty place : a place where the notes of praise could never be truly joyous, because lacking the fresh clear tones of a child's voice. Sometimes, as I stand in the pulpit listening to a great hymn that is being sung, I get such a thrill of joy, when quite through the great mass of harmony there reaches me some strain sung in the clear, fresh treble of a child's voice. When I

hear that it makes me as glad as if I were walking in the fields and heard among all the sounds of summer the music of a lark singing its way toward heaven. The church *without* the children? God forbid! It would be a failure.

For how in the world could the church go on if the children gave up coming? You see what would happen: the grown people being the only ones left in the church would grow older and older, and sadder and sadder, without any children to brighten them up, and one by one the grown people would die, and leave empty places, for there would be no one to fill their places if the children stopped coming. Oh! children, how our dear older friends in this church are passing away! If there were no children growing up to take their places, in a few years this church would be empty. So you see the church cannot do without the children. Without you, my little friends, the church would be a failure. Perhaps this is a new idea.

Perhaps you never thought before that the church needs you. Well, realize it now, for it is a very grand thought. It shows you how important your lives are. And do not think that the only reason you are needed here is to fill up the empty places left by the older friends who go away to the other life; you are needed here for what you *are* now. By coming to church you make every one happier, you strengthen and gladden the whole place and the whole service; and as for him who is speaking these words to you, he *could* not go on without you. His courage would just give out altogether if he could not see your faces here and feel that you are growing up in the spirit of this place. I heard such a pretty story not long since about the dear Bishop Phillips Brooks. He went to a town for a certain great service, and he was to stay at a certain gentleman's house. And when he reached the house the gentleman and his wife were out. But the bishop went in. And when they

came home they could not find the bishop, and they said, "Where can the bishop have gone?" and just then they heard shouts of laughter upstairs, so upstairs they went, to find — what do you think? — the great bishop on the floor in the nursery having a wild frolic with the children, and the children thinking he was the best playmate they ever knew. Ah! the bishop knew, great minister of God that he was, what gives courage to the tired heart of one of Christ's preachers, weary with trying to influence grown people who are set in their ways. The bishop knew the power children have to make one's heart young again and brave and full of hope. Yes, dear hearts, do not forget that the church needs you.

But what about *you?* Do *you* need the church? Do you need to come here even while you are little children, and all the way on through the days of your youth, to praise God in His Sanctuary? Let the last word I shall speak to you to-day be

about this: and let me speak it right down into the depths of your life. You can no more do without the church than the church can do without you. I said a moment ago that a church without children is as incomplete as a home without children. I will now say what is just as true, that children who grow up without coming to church, if they are well enough to come, are as incomplete as children who grow up without a home. A child who has no home, who has just knocked about in the world, staying now here, now there, brought up by strangers, has lost from its life a most precious earthly influence, and most probably it has either been shut up within itself or its nature has opened out in bad ways. The fine, gentle sides of its nature have hardly been able to develop. The influence of a loving home would have made that child quite a different being. But what it loses in not having a home is not so great as what it loses by not coming to church to praise God in His Sanctuary.

It is here in the sweet calm Sanctuary of God, our Father's House on earth, we learn to worship and to praise, learn to open our natures to the Holy Spirit, as the ferns in springtime unroll their tender fronds in sunlight. It is here in the calm Sanctuary of God our souls find a refuge when the storms and struggles of life begin. But suppose as children we do not come to church: suppose we say, "I will go to Sunday-school but not to church;" suppose we get in the habit of spending our Sundays at home, idly or foolishly — by so doing we are forming a habit which will slowly rise like a great wall of stone, higher and higher, to keep us away from the Sanctuary of our Father.

Many times, dear children, I have spoken to you very earnest words; but never have I spoken more earnestly than this very day. My whole heart is wrapped up in what I am saying. The church needs you and you need the church. This place is incomplete without you and you are in-

complete without this place. You have something in yourselves which you can give by coming, that adds to the strength and beauty of the church, and the church has something to give to you, which you cannot find anywhere else in the earth except in the Sanctuary of God. Come then, as children, more and more regularly, knowing your presence here is a joy and an inspiration. Come as boys and girls, as young men and young women, thinking of this place as a home, a refuge, a Sanctuary, where you can pour out your deepest thoughts into the answering heart of Jesus, where you can find a resting place in the hurry of life, where you can gain fresh strength to help you in your time of need. *Amen.*

ALMIGHTY GOD, unto Whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

THE CHILD AT THE HOLY COMMUNION.

THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

1 Corinthians xi. 23.

FOR a long time, especially since last summer, I have greatly wanted a quiet talk with you about the Holy Communion. And the hour seems at last to have come for a talk about this subject, so great, so tender, so beautiful. I am conscious of three reasons why I so much wish to speak about the Communion, or, as it is also called, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. My first reason is: because I myself so love the service, it is a joy to speak of it. This is, perhaps, a selfish reason, yet not wrong on that account. The Communion Service is, for me, a grand and wonderful hour, one of the most happy hours I ever spend. When it is drawing near, I look forward to it with eager anticipation, as to one of the gladdest

things of life. When it has passed by, I look back upon it as one of those dear memories which make our life more rich and more complete, and which can never be taken away. When I am in the very midst of the hour, ministering at the Holy Table, I often think there is nothing nobler or more beautiful for a man to do on earth. When I was a boy, I used to think the Communion was something very sad and gloomy. It seemed to me that it was mournful as a funeral service, and for a time I dreaded the thought of it. But that was only because I did not understand its meaning, and perhaps I did not understand very well those who took charge of the service in the church I attended. But that idea of sadness and gloom has long since passed away. And instead of thinking that to go to Communion is like walking down into some valley of shadow, silent and sad, I now think that it is like walking up in glorious afternoon light, upon a broad and sunny hill. Naturally, having such

love for the Communion, I want to speak of it.

I have another reason for wishing to speak of the Communion: it is because so many in whose lives I am interested come to Communion. They know what it means; and for many of them it has the same joy it has for me. During the last few years, many young lives have taken their places at the Communion, confessing Christ, and entering openly the life of discipleship. And a great number of these are finding out what glorious influences there are in this Communion Service. All of these young lives will be glad to have our thought take this direction now, even though I speak of much with which they are already familiar. To those who love the Communion, the story of its origin and of its meaning is never wearisome. The more we think of its meaning, the more we meditate upon those sublime scenes amidst which it began, the more richly do we enjoy it, and receive the peculiar strength

which it is meant to give. Those to whom the Communion is a tiresome form are they who think little about it. Many are there who think *much* about it, and to whom, as a reward of that thinking, it is constantly growing richer and dearer.

But I have one other reason, and the very strongest reason, for wishing to speak of the Communion to-day. It is for the sake of those children who do not understand what this Service is. They hear it spoken of: they have a vague idea of its nature. They know that their parents and many of their friends go to it; perhaps some of their companions, of their own age, have lately begun to go to Communion. They feel there is something about it which is not clear to their understanding, although they may have been present looking on, when the Communion Service has taken place, in the church. Among these dear young lives who do not yet understand this matter, there are many who want to understand it; who

feel there is something here which they ought to know about, because they see that it means so much to others. How truly I long, in this quiet talk about the Communion, to help those who want to understand it, to show them how closely the Communion is associated with Christ; that Christ's own Hands have arranged this Service, and Christ's own Lips have told us what it shall be; and that those who take part in this Service, if they come sincerely, place themselves under influences which make life happier, stronger, more earnest, and more brave.

Let us suppose a person to have come here this afternoon, who had never before in his life heard of the Communion, who had not the slightest idea what we mean by the word. He hears the notice given that there will be Communion here next Sunday; he hears what has just been said about the noble and happy nature of that service. His curiosity is aroused. He wants to know all about it. He comes to

me to be told about it. He begins to ask questions. It is easy to imagine the questions he would ask. Let us ask them, and try to answer them. His first question would be: "What kind of a service is the Communion Service?" Then he would ask: "Who gave you the idea of such a service?" Then I presume he would ask: "Of what use is this service?" And then his last question might be: "Who may come to the Communion?"

This person, who has never before in his life heard of the Communion, listens to all that has been said, and then we may imagine him coming to me and saying: "What kind of a service is the Communion?" The best answer I could make to that question would be: "Come next Sunday and see for yourself." He accepts my invitation and he comes. What does he see? He sees a great congregation gathering silently and thoughtfully by scores, and fifties, and hundreds, until the church is almost filled. And here, set

forth before the people, he sees a table, covered with a snow-white cloth. On the table are set cups of wine and plates of bread. A hymn is sung, the Bible is read, and earnest prayer for God's blessing is made. Then some young lives come and stand before the table in the presence of the congregation, and this is a Sign that each of those young lives has acknowledged Jesus as Saviour, and is willing that every one shall know it. Then, when some sweet words of Jesus have been repeated, these plates of bread and these cups of wine are lifted from the table, and are carried up and down the church, and every one is given the chance to eat a small morsel of bread and to taste a few drops of wine. Then after making gifts for the poor, and after singing a joyful hymn, the people go away, greeting each other kindly as they go. If this person who had never heard before of the Communion were looking on at this strange scene, he might ask: "Is the

Communion Service always like this in all churches?" I would answer: No, not always so. There is always bread and always wine; but there are many different ways of carrying on the Communion Service. I have described how it is done in this church, but it is done differently in many other churches. Once I received the Communion in a church where the people sat at a long table, as long as the church, and passed the bread and the wine from one to another as they sat. Often I have received the Communion in churches where those who wished to take the bread and wine left their seats, and came forward to the minister, and knelt at a railing in front of him, and received the bread and wine from his hands. Many times I have taken Communion in the sick room, where one person was lying in bed suffering, perhaps dying, and where the others sat or stood or knelt about the room, wherever they could find places. There are still other ways of which I have

not spoken. But these differences do not alter the Communion: there is always the bread and the wine, always the stillness of prayer and earnest thought; always, to some extent, the sweet sense of companionship with friends who believe much that we believe, and who love much that we love.

But now, suppose this friend who never before had heard of the Communion were to watch the service. His first question: "What kind of a service is it?" would be answered by what he saw then and there taking place. But when he had watched it all, his next question would, I think, be even more eagerly asked than the first: "Who gave you the idea of such a service? How strange to bring food into church and eat it there: people surely may eat what they need at home. Where did the idea of this service come from?" It would be a sufficient answer to the question to say: Jesus Christ said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." There are

some things we do in church that we plan and arrange for ourselves, but the Communion Service is Christ's own planning. He started it with His own Hands and with His own Voice: and we, in carrying it on, are doing what He began, and what He has told us to continue. He began this Service the night before He died on the Cross. He got together His own dearest friends, and had a perfectly wonderful talk with them about what they were to do after He had risen from the dead, and had passed out of their sight. He said: "Do not be troubled or anxious because you do not see Me. I shall come back again some time, so that you can see Me, and in the mean time the Blessed Holy Spirit will stay in your hearts all the time to make you strong and brave. He will show you that I am still with you, although you cannot see Me. I want to give you a Sign, something you can keep in remembrance of Me always, something which means much to Me, and will mean

much to you as you grow to understand Me better. I want to give something so simple that all who believe on Me and love Me can have it wherever they are, and every time they look at it and use it, they will have their thoughts of Me made fresh and new, and they will have their own lives made glad and strong. I will choose as this Sign bread and wine: things that everybody knows about and everybody can get. Let the bread always mean to you, My Body, which I am going to give as an Offering for the sins of the world. Let the wine always mean to you My Blood, My very Life, which I am giving for you, that you may have Its power in yourselves, to make *your* lives new and fresh and strong. I give you this dear and simple Sign, in token of My love, in token that, although you cannot see Me always, I am *always* with you, that I will never leave you nor forsake you, that I will come again to you. Now, if you care for me, you will keep this Sign as a

precious thing. You will love it. You will delight in setting it before your eyes, and taking it again and again and again, with the feeling that every time you take it, it is really coming straight from My Hands to you. And the joy you will have in using this Sign will be measured only by how much you really care for Me. If I am really the Master, the great Ruling Influence in your life, this Sign of Communion will become to you full of the most dear, inspiring associations, memories and hopes. It will be a help, beyond words, in assisting you to keep a fresh, living sense of My love and My faithfulness. Here then, I give you the Sign. Take this bread as I give it, take this wine as I bestow it. Let it mean to you what it means to Me. Let it be in your life a memory of what has been, an assurance of what is, a pledge and promise of what is yet to be. This do in remembrance of Me."

Oh! you dear young hearts! Is there

not much in this that appeals to you? You who have already claimed your place at the Communion, are you not glad that into your life this wondrous Sign is given of a love which has suffered for you in the bitter past, which hovers over you in the present with unspeakable joy and hope, which is planning for you in the future, such things as pass man's understanding? Are you not glad that as earthly life with its many interests demands time and thought, and often covers you with clouds of care, you have this wondrous Sign of Communion within your reach, bringing so near to you the Saviour's affection, and giving you opportunity to show your affection for Him? And you, beloved children, who have not yet come into those places which are waiting for you at the Communion, do you catch, from what I have said, any of the joy that is in store for you? This Sign is for you also. Jesus is looking upon you with His great love, and many of you are beginning to feel that He is looking on

you, and you are turning yourselves with many new desires toward Him. Perhaps I am at this very moment speaking to some boy or to some girl who is filled with these new desires and thoughts, who hardly understands what has taken place, who only knows that there is a yearning words cannot express to be a disciple of Christ. To you He is holding out this Blessed Sign; and soon, ah! very soon, may you take it and use it, and know the comfort of having it.

But what I have just said leads me on to the next question which you remember we imagined the man to be asking who was looking upon the Communion Service for the first time in his life. We have answered his first question: "What is this service like?" And we have answered his second question: "Who gave you the idea of this service?" Now, almost surely, his next question would be: "Of what use is this service?" To one who does not care for Christ, or wish to be like Him, I will

quite frankly say: To *you* there is no use in this service — it simply means nothing at all. You do not see anything in it. What use can there be in sitting in church, eating a morsel of bread, tasting a few drops of wine? But is not that true in a great many ways? I may have some things which are very precious to me for the sake of the one who gave them, or of the event of which they remind me: while to another who does not know the friend who gave them, or the reason they were given, the things mean simply nothing. The Communion is precious and useful only to those who know the dear Lord Jesus, and understand *why* He gave us this Sign. It can hardly do any one good to come and simply eat bread and drink wine. There is nothing in the bread and wine by themselves which can help us. They only help us when our thought connects them with Him Who has explained to us that of which they are a Sign. But to one who is drawn to the Communion by the love of Christ,

help comes in many ways, and the use of the service is easily explained.

The Communion is useful as an act of obedience. Jesus says plainly: "This *do.*" And you remember what the mother of Jesus said to the servants at the marriage in Galilee: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, *do it.*" Even if the Communion had never brought any comfort or joy into any one's life, we might be perfectly sure that we need it, because Christ has told us to do it. I always think of this at the Communion: this is something Jesus tells me to do. I am obeying His own wise Word when I come to this table and eat what is thereon. And I feel sure that if one begins by coming as an act of obedience, doing this simply because He tells us to do it, we shall be made stronger and shall find out how much more it is than merely an act of obedience.

The Communion is useful as an act of remembrance. This is a very sweet use. When we come to this snow-white table,

and see the bread and wine upon it, when we take our place in the beautiful silence, and lift our voice in the beautiful hymn, when we taste the precious Sign, our memory becomes full of Christ. We think back to the hour when His own Hands spread the feast, and His own Voice said, "Do it." And we can realize Christ in his pure and holy Person, as our Saviour, Master, Friend, King. We feel so strongly the effect of this strong and vivid remembrance of Christ, it has seemed, sometimes, after such a service as if we had really looked upon Him with our eyes and spoken to Him. And as we go on into our daily life, that fresh memory follows us, and keeps long with us, and blesses us.

The Communion is useful as an act of belief. When one who loves Jesus takes that Sign in the Spirit in which Christ gave that Sign our belief in the true reality and power of His Blessed Death is made stronger. He has told us what the Bread and Wine are ever to mean to us: the

Bread His Body, the Wine His Blood, and when we come to His table, and take this Sign as if from His own Hand, oh! how it strengthens us: the Holy Spirit seems to tone up all our thought and our life; peace is spread afresh over our hearts, earnest love warms them, holy thoughts take possession of them; and we often come away from that dear table feeling as if Christ's very Arm was around us to hold us up and keep us safe.

The Communion is useful as an act of loyalty. Before almost every Communion you will see some lives coming forward and taking their stand in front of this table, and gladly acknowledging Christ. And that is what the whole service is, for all who truly take part in it. We acknowledge that we trust Christ as our Saviour Who loved us and gave Himself for us, to redeem us by His most precious Blood. We say to the world by this glad act of Communion, that we believe Jesus died for us, and that the true purpose of our heart

is to serve with our life and strength this Blessed Master, until He comes again.

The Communion is useful as an act of fellowship. There is no fellowship on earth more beautiful, more cheering, more able to keep the heart strong and courageous, than the fellowship of those who have a common love for the Lord Jesus. That fellowship is a great bond, binding hearts to one another. Never is that fellowship more strongly felt than at the Communion. *Let discouraged hearts come,* and be cheered by the fellowship with other hearts. It is a fellowship not only with our friends whom we can see, but with unseen friends, some of them with Christ in Paradise. At His table we "gaze beyond the things we see." We realize that we are not in spirit separated from those precious ones who are with Him, and that because He lives, they live also.

The last question is: Who may come to Communion? Any one may come to *see* this beautiful Service. I wish many

of you would come, if only to understand better the meaning of it all by seeing and hearing. Come, and place yourself under the influence of the Communion hour, for it will help you as no other hour can help. Any one may *take* the Communion who loves Christ, who understands what the Communion means, and who is willing to acknowledge the Lord as Saviour and Master. Dearest child, will you bravely and sweetly acknowledge Him? Will you do this for your own sake, to make your life more free to grow up in His service? Will you, above all, do this in remembrance of Him? *Amen.*

NOW the light has gone away,
Saviour, listen while I pray —
Asking Thee to watch and keep,
And to send me quiet sleep.

Let my near and dear ones be
Always near and dear to Thee :
O bring me and all I love
To Thy happy Home above.

Thou, my best and kindest Friend,
Thou wilt love me to the end ;
Let me love Thee more and more
Always better than before.

Amen.

O HOLY SAVIOUR, the Friend and Companion of every child, grant that we who love Thee may so truly seek to do all things in remembrance of Thee; that our hearts shall be pure, our wills earnest, and our lives devoted to Thy service, both now and in all days and years to come, for Thy dear Name's sake. *Amen.*

LIGHTEN our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and by Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night, for the love of Thy Only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

THE Peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always. *Amen.*

BL
639
C4

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 021 623 542 3